

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, June 23, 2003

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II, with members Bloomfield, Kreider, Raser, Senhauser and Sullebarger present. Absent: Borys, Clement, Spraul-Schmidt and Wallace

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND ZONING VARIANCE, 444 READING ROAD, OVER-THE-RHINE (SOUTH) HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented the staff report on this request for a Certificate of to install a handicap ramp at the Pendleton Street entrance to the Saint Paul's Church (Verdin Bell) complex. This application was tabled at the May 19, 2003 meeting in order to give the applicant time to redesign the ramp based on Board comments.

Ms. Kellam explained that the new design is on the same footprint as that originally proposed, but incorporates a more substantial wood base and simplified wrought iron rail. The revised design also includes a planter at the foot of the ramp that further encroaches into the public way. Staff recommended approval of the revised design as sufficiently addressing the Board's concerns that the design be more compatible with the historic buildings in material and form, but recommended that the planter be deleted from the design. Ms. Kellam said the owner had agreed to that change.

Jim Verdin was present to answer questions from the Board. Mr. Verdin stated that the City had promised twenty-two years ago to construct a ramp at this site, but that he is now bearing the cost of the construction. He said he had priced a steel ramp as the Board had requested, but the cost was double that of the proposed design. The work is being coordinated with the City's street improvements along Pendleton Street. Mr. Verdin indicated that this week, City contractors broke through the sidewalk and a portion of the retaining wall collapsed.

Mr. Verdin confirmed that although the ramp is entirely within the right-of-way, the width of the remaining sidewalk is sufficient for pedestrian traffic. Jack Martin who is directing the streetscape project for the City's Department of Transportation and Engineering confirmed that he is assisting Mr. Verdin in securing a revocable street privilege for the ramp.

BOARD ACTION

By majority vote (motion by Kreider, second by Sullebarger, Bloomfield abstaining), the Board approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a wood and wrought iron handicap ramp at 444 Reading Road finding that in this case given the limited budget, any type of steel or masonry handicap ramp is cost prohibitive with the following conditions:

1. The flower boxes be eliminated from the design
2. Final plans and any revisions be submitted to the Urban Conservator prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness and building permit.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND ZONING VARIANCE, 1618
SYCAMORE AVENUE, PROSPECT HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented the staff report on this request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a rear addition to 1618 Sycamore Street, a contributing building in the Prospect Hill Historic District. The new addition would incorporate an elevator tower, roof deck and attached two-car garage facing onto Von Seggern Alley. Ms. Cowden indicated that the property is being adapted for the owner who had recently become wheelchair-bound. Ms. Cowden said the owner had met with the Prospect Hill Neighborhood Association, but that no comments were received. Likewise, only the owner and her representatives attended the pre-hearing meeting.

Ms. Cowden described the form and material of the new addition that would also require a zoning variance for the garage setback. She indicated that several elements of the design did not conform to the letter of the historic district guidelines or conflicted with other recent decisions made by the Board. Specifically, the height of the elevator shaft exceeds that of adjacent buildings and the single, double width garage door has generally been discouraged in favor of a pair of single-width doors. Ms. Cowden pointed out that both these conditions result from providing handicap access. The larger garage door provides sufficient width and turning radius off Seggern Alley to allow wheelchair access to a vehicle parked in the garage. Likewise, the height of the penthouse is required for elevator access to the roof deck and is not highly visible from elsewhere on Prospect Hill.

Staff recommended that the Board approve the concept of a roof deck, elevator addition and garage, but believed that the materials and detailing of the new construction needed modification or clarification. Specifically, staff recommended that the roof overhang and wide eaves be reduced, that the fenestration on the penthouse be revised and that the height of the elevator shaft not exceed the neighboring joined residence. Ms. Cowden said that a zoning variance for a rear yard setback would be required to allow the garage to be built as proposed.

The project designer Michael Garrison, the owner Gail Sheldon and her contractor were present to answer questions from the Board. Mr. Senhauser commented that the roof shapes were confusing, atypical of the district as a whole and poorly integrated with the house. He said his greater concern was whether the plan as proposed could be built under the City's building code. Specifically, the code prohibits property line windows as shown and deck access may not be by elevator only. He suggested the Board consider this as a preliminary design review and conduct a final review once the designer has met with the Department of Buildings & Inspections regarding the building code issues.

Mr. Garrison said the multiple rooflines resulted from connecting the new construction with various shed additions to the house. He reiterated that extreme vertical elements are required to provide wheelchair access to the roof deck. Mr. Raser observed that the sideyard setback is less than three feet, so the garage would have to be fire separated. Mr. Bloomfield suggested that hardi-board or vinyl siding may not be the best sheathing material. Mr. Senhauser pointed out that the present roof configuration would shed water onto neighboring properties.

The owners' son Tre Sheldon said that the work under review was only part of the total project and that the front façade of the house would be restored. He also

indicated that the roof deck would be set into the pitch of the rear addition and would not project above the roof. He showed photographs of unkempt lots and other garages in the neighborhood. Board members emphasized that they understood the need to address handicap access and provide secure parking, but they were concerned about the execution of the design. The Board indicated its support for investing in the neighborhood and encouraged the owner to return when the building code issues were resolved.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Kreider, second by Bloomfield) to table the application in order to give the owner an opportunity to review the proposed design with Buildings & Inspections and return with a revised plan that will meet building code requirements and better address the historic district guidelines.

ZONING VARIANCE, 221-229 WEST 5th STREET, WEST 4TH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented the staff report on this request for a Downtown Development variance to permit the continued use of this site for surface parking. This matter had been heard at the Board's May 5, 2003 meeting and tabled with a request that the owner provide additional documentation on its efforts to market the property for development and for staff to provide additional information on the City's plans for the area. Ms. Kellam summarized the most recent plans for the expansion of the Convention Center and the area to its south and referenced the owner's written account of marketing efforts. She indicated that the applicant was now applying for a simple three-year extension of the existing variance.

BOARD ACTION

The majority of the Board voted (motion by Sullebarger, second by Bloomfield. Kreider abstaining) to take the following actions:

- 1 Find that all conditions stipulated in 1443-507 of the Cincinnati Zoning Code (Standards for Granting a Variance) had been met.
- 2 Grant a variance of Section 1443-408 (f) (DD District Parking Use Table) and 1443-408 (h) (Fencing of Surface Parking Lots) of the Cincinnati Zoning Code to permit the use of the property as a surface parking lot for 36 months from the date of approval with the following conditions:
 - a. Pursuant to Sections 1443-704 (Covenants and Easements) and 1443-508 (Conditional Variances) of the Cincinnati Zoning Code and prior to the issuance of any certificate of occupancy, the Director of Buildings and Inspections shall obtain from the owner a written acceptance of the terms and conditions included in this approval. The written acceptance shall be in the form of a covenant prepared at the owner's expense and approved by the Director of Buildings and Inspections and shall be entered upon the records of the Hamilton County Recorder at the expense of the owner.
 - b. The parking lot and landscaping shall be kept free of debris and properly maintained, with vegetation replaced as necessary.
 - c. Development plans and/or marketing efforts for the site must be presented to the Urban Conservator prior to the end of the 36 month period.

**ZONING VARIANCE, 1316-1320 MAIN STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE (SOUTH)
HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented the staff report on this request to subdivide 1316-1320 Main Street and 207 Woodward Street.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Sullebarger, second by Bloomfield) to take the following actions:

- 1 Approve the proposal to subdivide parcels 07500040041 and 07500040042 into three discrete parcels; and
- 2 Grant the necessary rear yard variances, finding that such relief:
 - a. Is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation so as not to adversely affect the historic, architectural or aesthetic integrity; and
 - b. Will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare or injurious to the property in the district or vicinity.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Kreider raised the issue of the on-going renovation of 1886 Madison Road, in the East Walnut Hills Historic District. He said that the property has stood for months with roofing paper coming off the front porch and various items of work left partially complete elsewhere on the building. This has been the situation for several years. He suggested that the Department of Buildings and Inspections should take steps enforce the minimum maintenance requirement of the historic conservation legislation in order to resolve the situation.

He also cited the open lot at 600-604 Reading Road as being in violation of City codes. The lot is the result of a demolition approved by the Historic Conservation Board on the condition that the property be maintained and kept free of debris. He said the lot is and has been overgrown and presently a storage container is parked on the site. He suggested that Buildings and Inspections move against the owner to comply with the Board's conditions as well as City health laws.

In answer to the Board, Mr. Forwood reported that the two houses proposed for 1895-1899 Madison Road are being redesigned in light of the Board's comments and that the applicant would return with a revised design requiring no zoning variance.

Mr. Senhauser inquired about the status of accepting a pre-approved product list for windows and doors. Two three-person committees had been formed to independently review submissions; however only one committee had met. It was agreed that the remaining members would consider the findings of the initial review group. Products would be approved for each historic district with economic circumstances considered.

Mr. Forwood acknowledged that a replacement for Ms. Borys will be appointed by the City Manager by the next Board meeting. Architect David Kirk will be invited to join the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other items for consideration by the Board, the meeting adjourned.

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser
Chairman

Date